

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 766

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 2308

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, PFOR, PDIP, ID, SA

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DESIGNATE TO INDONESIA NURI IBRAHIM

REFS: A. STATE 69173 B. JAKARTA 3355

1. WE CAN ADD LITTLE TO THE DETAILS OF NURI IBRAHIM'S LIFE PROVIDED REF A. AMB. IBRAHIM IS A RATHER UNENTHUSIASTIC AMBASSADOR DESIGNATE. HE WAS OFFERED BUT DECLINED THE EMBASSIES IN OTTAWA AND CANBERRA. HE CLAIMS ALSO TO HAVE ONCE TURNED DOWN HIS ASSIGNMENT TO JAKARTA BUT TO HAVE AGREED TO TAKE IT AT THE PERSONAL INSISTENCE OF THE LATE KING FAISAL WHO CONSIDERED IT A VERY IMPORTANT POST FOR ESSENTIALLY ISLAMIC REASONS.

2. THE BULK OF NURI'S TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN IN THE U.S. AND WESTERN EUROPE WHERE WE HAVE THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION HE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED AN ASSIGNMENT. HE HAS BEEN TELLING US FOR TWO MONTHS NOW THAT HE WILL BE LEAVING VERY SHORTLY FOR JAKARTA BUT HE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN DELAYING HIS DEPARTURE. WITH THE DEATH OF KING FAISAL AND THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS (NURI DIDN'T GET ALONG TOO WELL WITH THE ACTING MINISTER UNDER WHOSE TENURE HIS APPOINTMENT WAS ANNOUNCED), WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF HE WERE FURTHER TO DELAY HIS DEPARTURE, THOUGH THE IMPENDING VISIT OF SUHARTO TO SAUDI ARABIA MAY FORCE THE ISSUE.

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3. FOR ABOUT THE LAST TWO YEARS NURI HAS BEEN DIRECTOR OF WESTERN AFFAIRS (EUROPE, NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA PLUS AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND). HE HAS BEEN BOTH VERY ACCESSIBLE AND HELPFUL. IN SPITE OF HIS NOMINAL RESPONSIBILITIES, HOWEVER, HE HAS BEEN OPERATING BELOW THE POLICY LEVEL AND HAD BEEN CAUTIOUS IN MAKING DECISIONS ON ISSUES WHICH HE FELT MIGHT BE CONTENTIOUS.

4. NURI IS ONE OF THE FEW SAUDIS WILLING TO BE STRAIGHTFORWARD IN DISCUSSING SAUDI INTERIOR POLITICS WITH OTHER THAN VERY INTIMATE FRIENDS. HOWEVER, HIS COMPARATIVE OPENNESS AND WILLINGNESS TO BE CRITICAL, HIS TOTAL COMMAND OF ENGLISH, AND HIS WESTERN MANNERS TEND TO OBSCURE THE FACT THAT HE IS BASICALLY A CONSERVATIVE AND EVEN TRADITIONAL SAUDI.

5. NURI IS CHARMING, INTELLIGENT AND KNOWLEDGEABLE AND A SOCIAL ASSESS IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCE. WHEN (OR IF) HE GETS TO JAKARTA, WE STONGLY RECOMMEND THAT HE BE CULTIVATED BY THE EMBASSY. APART FROM THE FACT THAT HE IS A VERY PLEASANT PERSON, WE WILL HAVE AN ACCESS TO ESSENTIALLY ISLAMIC CIRCLES WHICH MAY PROVE USEFUL.

6. NURI RECALLS HAVING MET AMBASSADOR NEWSOM IN LATE 1950'S WHEN AMBASSADOR WAS OIC ARABIAN PENINSULA AFFAIRS.
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